



WESTFIELD  
ACADEMY

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Headteacher: T.Body BA (Hons), MA

11/03/21

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to provide you with as much detail as we can about the GCSE Level grades will be determined this summer. I would have liked to have shared this information with students this week but due to testing we are unable to hold whole year group assemblies, however, I will see students during registrations to explain the details.

As you know, at the end of February Ofqual published the outcomes of its consultation. The full document is available on the link below. Whilst this gives us much information about the grading process we must follow, we still await crucial guidance from the examination boards (as referred to in the Ofqual document). We are expecting this guidance during the week of 22 March and until we receive this we cannot finalise our plans.

However, our view is that we need to provide our students with a timeline of how the next few months will look. In this letter, we share some key extracts from the Ofqual document and hopefully provide answers to some common questions and share with you our timeline for assessment.

### **How will grades be awarded this summer?**

Grades for GCSE will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance and external quality assurance by the examination boards. The national process defined by the Department for Education and the examinations' regulator, Ofqual, is as follows:

Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the examination boards before the Easter break.

Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school**. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the examination board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.

The school's grades will be **quality assured externally** by the examination boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence.

If the examination boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the examination boards will award students their final grades**.

If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.

### What evidence will be used to determine a student's grade?

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence. This may be evidence we already have, for example, previous tests, assessed tasks or NEA (coursework) or may be evidence teachers gather over the coming weeks.

### When will students be assessed?

So students can prepare for future assessments, we have drawn up an assessment schedule as detailed below. This includes both controlled conditions assessments and in class assessments. The key difference is that for controlled conditions assessments, all students taking a subject sit the assessment at the same time. Students will follow their normal timetable unless they are completing a controlled conditions assessment; students will not have any study leave during this period.

### Assessment timeline to support GCSE grading

SUMMER TERM				
Apr 2021		Before School Event	Day Event	After School
<b>Week 2</b>				
Mon	12	Before school Maths - Invite only	<b>controlled assessments in class begin</b>	After school revision continues - MFL
Tues	13			RE
Wed	14			Business & IT
Thurs	15			DT& Food
Fri	16	Before school Maths - Invite only		BTEC Sport
Sat	17		9-11am (subjects tbc)	
<b>Week 1</b>				
Mon	19	Before school Maths - Invite only		Science
Tues	20			History & Geography
Wed	21			English
Thurs	22		<b>Yr11 parents evening</b>	Maths
Fri	23			RE
Sat	24	Before school Maths - Invite only	9-11am (subjects tbc)	
<b>Week 2</b>				
Mon	26	Before school Maths - Invite only		MFL
Tues	27			RE
Wed	28			Business & IT
Thurs	29			DT& Food
Fri	30	Before school Maths - Invite only	<b>Data from controlled assessment tests uploaded</b>	BTEC Sport

May 2021		Before School Event	Day Event	After School
<b>Week 1</b>				
Mon	3			<b>Bank Holiday</b>
Tues	4			History & Geography
Wed	5			English
Thurs	6			Maths
Fri	7	Before school Maths - Invite only		RE
Sat	8		9-11am (subjects tbc)	
<b>Week 2</b>				
Mon	10		<b>Internal Exams begin.</b>	
Tues	11			
Wed	12			
Thurs	13			
Fri	14			
Sat	15		9-11am (subjects tbc)	
<b>Week 1</b>				
Mon	17			
Tues	18			
Wed	19			
Thurs	20		<b>Internal Exams end.</b>	

Changes to this schedule will only be made if absolutely necessary once we receive the full guidance from the examination boards. Any changes will be communicated as soon as possible. We ask for your support in minimising absence during this period and ask that medical appointments etc are not scheduled at times that may clash with assessments.

The deadline for the school to submit grades to the examination boards is Friday 18 June. Given that assessments require detailed marking and moderating, evidence needs collating and grades then determining, we do not envisage assessments running past May half term. However, at this point no decision has been made about stand-down dates and families are asked not to make any assumptions.

### Do teachers award the grade?

Despite the common use of 'teacher-assessed grades', the answer is actually no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessment of their performance across the range of evidence. This is against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the examination body as usual.

If you have not already noted so, please be aware that unlike last year, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on the achievement of students, providing we have evidence that they are working at that grade.

### Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?

This year the external quality assurance process (carried out by the examination boards) and the appeals process are designed to ensure consistency and fairness across the system. The standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the examination boards and this will be used to align evidence with grades.

### Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?

Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the content they have been taught; they will not be assessed on areas that have not been covered. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence, they are committing examination malpractice.

In any communication with teachers, please do be aware that in 2020 it was considered examination malpractice if any student or parent placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades. Our understanding is that this is likely to be the same for 2021. We do understand that grades are important, but please respect the fact that all students will have the same opportunities to demonstrate their skills and understanding, and that our teachers are trained professionals who are working extremely hard to ensure a fair and accurate grading process.

Where there are extenuating circumstances, over and above the challenges of home learning and/or anxiety about the grading process, that have significantly impacted your child during Year 10 and/or Year 11 it is important that they, or you, let us know. However, please be aware that it may not be possible to make allowances as grading decisions must reflect the evidence we have, not what might have been achieved had circumstances been different. Students or parents/carers should contact Mrs Riaz on [ir@westfield.academy](mailto:ir@westfield.academy) or Mr Meale on [dme@westfield.academy](mailto:dme@westfield.academy) if they wish to provide any details for consideration.

### **Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

As explained previously, we will share with you the range of evidence on which grade judgements will be based. However, we are not allowed to disclose the final grade we submit to the examination board and students and parents/carers are discouraged from trying to second-guess the grade submitted.

### **Appeals**

If after students receive their results, they believe their grade is wrong they have the right to appeal their grade. This year, there are two avenues for appeal. A student can ask the school to check for administrative errors. If asked, we will do this and if we have made a mistake, we will fix it.

### **What should students do to improve their grades?**

There will be opportunities (as per the assessment timeline above) for students to demonstrate their capabilities. To ensure they perform to their best in these assessments they should attend lessons, actively engage with their learning, act on feedback from their teachers, revise as directed and ask for help when unsure.

Their grade will be based on their performance and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands. However, hard work and success to date will not be discounted; where we have existing evidence that fulfils the necessary criteria this will be used to support our decision making.

### **Intervention & support**

During the weeks leading up to controlled assessments and exams, students will be offered before school, after school, weekend and Easter holiday sessions to prepare them for exams, these sessions are highlighted on the above timeline, they are based on invite only and heads of faculties will be in touch to let you know if your child is expected to attend.

**Please note that GCSE results day is Thursday 12 August, details around this day will follow.**

Once internal exams are completed to sixth form timetables will begin, Mrs Porter will be in touch regarding to dates and timeline for this.

We hope the information in this letter has been helpful. However, we recognise there are still unanswered questions. The likelihood is that we don't yet know the answers as we are awaiting the examination board guidance. We respectfully ask that you are patient and allow us to plan the next steps. We will communicate these as soon as we can.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/965005/6747-1\\_decisions\\_-\\_GQ\\_consultation\\_on\\_awarding\\_grades\\_in\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965005/6747-1_decisions_-_GQ_consultation_on_awarding_grades_in_2021.pdf).

Yours sincerely,

*I Riaz*

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